

# Tragedy in the Alps



## Europe in Shock as Plane Crash Kills 150 People

Rescue workers and gendarme gather in Seyne-les-Alpes, French Alps, Tuesday, March 24, 2015, as search-and-rescue teams struggle to reach the remote crash site of Germanwings passenger plane. A Germanwings passenger jet carrying 150 people crashed Tuesday in the French Alps as it flew from Spain's Barcelona airport to Duesseldorf in Germany, authorities said. (AP Photo/Claude Paris)



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# Europe in shock as plane crash kills 150 people



A student lights a candle in front of the Joseph-Koenig Gymnasium in Haltern, western Germany Tuesday, March 24, 2015. A Germanwings plane from Barcelona crashed on its way to Duesseldorf over the French alps, 16 school children and 2 teachers from Haltern were among the 150 people on board. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner)

**GREG KELLER**  
**ANGELA CHARLTON**  
**Associated Press**  
**SEYNE-LES-ALPES, France**  
**(AP)** — A black box recovered from the scene and pulverized pieces of debris strewn across Alpine mountainsides held clues to what caused a budget airliner to take an unexplained eight-minute dive Tuesday mid-way through a flight from Spain to Germany, apparently killing all 150 people on board.

The victims included two babies, two opera singers and 16 German high school students and their teachers returning from an exchange trip to Spain. It was the deadliest crash in France in decades.

The Airbus A320 operated by Germanwings, a budget subsidiary of Lufthansa, was less than an hour from landing in Duesseldorf on a flight from Barcelona when it unexpectedly went into a rapid descent. The pilots sent out no distress call and had lost radio contact with their control center, France's aviation authority said, deepening the mystery.

While investigators searched through debris

from Flight 9525 on steep and desolate slopes, families across Europe reeled with shock and grief. Sobbing relatives at both airports were led away by airport workers and crisis counselors.

"The site is a picture of horror. The grief of the families and friends is immeasurable," German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said after being flown over the crash scene. "We must now stand together. We are united in our great grief."

It took investigators hours to reach the site, led by mountain guides to the craggy ravine in the southern French Alps, not far from the Italian border and the French Riviera.

Video shot from a helicopter and aired by BFM TV showed rescuers walking in the crevices of a rocky mountainside scattered with plane parts. Photos of the crash site showed white flecks of debris across a mountain and larger airplane body sections with windows. A helicopter crew that landed briefly in the area saw no signs of life, French officials said.

"Everything is pulverized.

The largest pieces of debris are the size of a small car. No one can access the site from the ground," Gilbert Sauvan, president of the general council, Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, told The Associated Press.

"This is pretty much the worst thing you can imagine," said Bodo Klimpel, mayor of the German town of Haltern, rent with sorrow after losing 16 tenth graders and their two teachers.

The White House and the airline chief said there was no sign that terrorism was involved, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel urged reporters not to speculate on the cause.

"We still don't know much beyond the bare information on the flight, and there should be no speculation on the cause of the crash," she said in Berlin. "All that will be investigated thoroughly."

Lufthansa Vice President Heike Birlenbach told reporters in Barcelona that for now "we say it is an accident."

In Washington, the White House said American officials were in contact with their French, Spanish and German counterparts. "There is no indication of a nexus to terrorism at this time," said U.S. National Security Council spokeswoman Bernadette Meehan. □

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## White House: US to slow troop withdrawal from Afghanistan

**JOSH LEDERMAN**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Barack Obama announced Tuesday that the U.S. will slow its military withdrawal from Afghanistan, maintaining 9,800 troops in the country through the end of 2015 instead of cutting the number by about half as originally planned.

"Afghanistan remains a very dangerous place," Obama said in explaining his decision at a press conference after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's first visit to the White House since his election six months ago. Obama added that the size of the U.S. troop presence for 2016 will be decided later this year.

Ghani had asked Obama to slow the withdrawal because Afghan security forces are bracing for a tough spring fighting season and are also contending with Islamic State fight-



**President Barack Obama meets with Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, Tuesday, March 24, 2015.**

ers looking to recruit on their soil.

The original plan was to cut the U.S. force to 5,500 by the end of this year.

Obama said he still intends

to complete the draw-down by the end of 2016 and that the U.S. transition out of a combat role has not changed.

"We want to make sure

(AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

we're doing everything we can to help Afghan security forces succeed so we don't have to go back," Obama said. He said he and the U.S. commanders in Afghanistan have concluded the extra time in the country "is well worth it."

Ghani thanked American servicemen and women and civilian contractors. "I'd also like to thank the American taxpayer for his and her hard-earned dollars," he said.

"Tragedy brought us together; interests now unite us," Ghani said. He said the slower U.S. troop withdrawal "will be used to accelerate reforms, to ensure that the Afghan National Security Forces are much better led, equipped, trained and are focused on their fundamental mission. He added that he was pleased to say that "the departure of 120,000 international troops has not brought about the security gap or collapse that was often

anticipated."

In Washington this week, Ghani is making his case that he's a reliable partner worthy of American support, despite his fractured government and a litany of problems still rampant in Afghanistan's military — illiteracy, drug abuse and desertions, to name a few. For Obama, Ghani represents the last, best hope to make good on the president's promise to end America's longest war by the time he leaves office, keeping just a thousand or so troops at the embassy to coordinate security. Ghani predecessor Hamid Karzai's relationship with the White House was increasingly dysfunctional, and if the dealings with Ghani don't turn out better, Obama risks leaving Afghanistan still vulnerable to the kinds of violent extremist groups that operated with impunity until 14 years ago, when the U.S. attacked after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror strikes against the U.S..

Also at stake: the future of U.S. bases in Jalalabad and in Kandahar, where the Taliban had their capital until 2001. U.S. military leaders have seemed receptive to Ghani's request that those bases stay open as long as possible.

Drawing a contrast with his predecessor, Ghani has taken pains on his U.S. visit to display gratitude for U.S. sacrifices in Afghanistan that the White House found lacking from Karzai. He began his trip by explicitly thanking the U.S. for its support. And on Tuesday morning, Ghani joined Defense Secretary Ash Carter and Vice President Joe Biden in laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery. □



# Commune leader gets life for slaying of member



Daniel Perez sits in Sedgwick District Court in Wichita, Kan., before sentencing, Tuesday, March 24, 2015. A judge sentenced Perez, the head of a former Kansas commune, to life in prison for the killing of a commune member 12 years ago. (AP Photo/Mike Hutmacher)

**ROXANA HEGEMAN**  
Associated press

**WICHITA, Kansas (AP)** — A man who led a commune that collected millions of dollars in life insurance payouts from dead members was sentenced Tuesday to life in prison for the drowning death of one of them 12 years ago.

Daniel Perez, 55, stared straight ahead and showed no emotion as he heard his sentence: a life term for murder in Patricia Hughes' 2003 death at the commune's compound near Wichita, another life term on a sexual exploitation of a child conviction, and nearly 34 more years

behind bars on 26 other counts, including rape.

Perez declined to address the court when given the chance.

Judge Joseph Bribiesca ordered Perez's sentences to be served consecutively, so he wouldn't be eligible for parole until he is 120 years old, according to prosecutors.

"The evidence conclusively shows that Mr. Perez used people as mere objects to fulfill his desire for money, sex and a lavish lifestyle," Bribiesca said. "It is just that he serve the maximum sentence."

Prosecutors say Perez sexually abused the young

daughters of commune members and devised a scheme to receive life insurance payments after members died.

"It is clear Mr. Perez was the puppet master," District Attorney Marc Bennett told the court.

During the trial, members of the now-defunct commune talked about how they moved from state to state and to Mexico over a 15-year period before they settled at the elaborate compound near Wichita, Kansas. They testified about being subjected to sexual violence by Perez and about the deaths of six people.

Perez, who went by Lou Castro, was charged only with the death of Hughes, who was 26 when she

drowned in the commune's pool. Her death was considered an accident until 2011, when a woman who was 12 when Hughes died told authorities that it had been staged to look accidental. The commune had received \$1.24 million from Hughes' life insurance policy.

Bennett told reporters after the hearing that the sentence Perez received was appropriate. The prosecutor said there were "so many lives, so many people" affected by Perez.

"At some point you lose track of how many victims this man actually victimized," he said.

Perez's attorney, Alice Osburn, did not immediately respond to a phone message seeking comment. □

## Victim advocates worry about discredited UVA rape account

**JULIET LINDERMAN**  
Associated Press

**BALTIMORE (AP)** — Advocates for sexual assault survivors are worried a movement that gained tremendous momentum in the past year could suffer a setback after the account of an alleged gang rape at the University of Virginia was debunked by police. An article in Rolling Stone magazine about a student identified only as "Jackie" described an alleged rape on campus and a culture of binge-drinking and looking the other way when students filed sexual assault complaints. The story intensified the national conversation about rapes on college campuses and

prompted changes at the university, but on Monday, Police Chief Timothy Longo said a months-long investigation turned up no evidence of a sexual assault, or any wrongdoing by the school. "One false report should not diminish the seriousness with which we take on the challenge of sexual assault on campus," said Daniel Carter, director of 32 National Campus Safety Initiative and an advocate for sexual assault survivors for more than two decades. "I do think, unfortunately, that such a high-profile discredited story will have negative impacts on people's willingness to believe survivors when they come forward." □

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In this 2012 photo, a police cruiser sits in the driveway of the home of Nancy Lanza in Newtown, Conn., the Colonial-style house where she had lived with her son Adam Lanza. Newtown Legislative Council Chair Mary Ann Jacob said Tuesday, March 24, 2015, that the building was torn down on Monday. (AP Photo/Jason DeCrow)

## Sandy Hook:

### School shooter Lanza's home demolished

**NEWTOWN, Conn. (AP)** — The Connecticut home of the man who carried out the 2012 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary school has been demolished, Newtown officials said Tuesday.

Adam Lanza killed his mother, Nancy Lanza, inside the house on the morning of Dec. 14, 2012, then drove to the school where he gunned down 20 children and six adults before committing suicide. The killings galvanized gun-control groups around the country.

The 2-acre (.81-hectare) lot where the 3,100-square-foot (288-square meter)

house once stood in a leafy, suburban neighborhood will be left as open space under a plan approved by town officials. Several neighbors had asked for the building to be taken down, describing it as a constant reminder of the tragedy.

Among them, Dave Ackart said in a letter: "Not only is the property a constant reminder of the evil that resided there — those of us who walk, run, drive, ride or otherwise must pass it multiple times a day, are having a hard time moving on." The yellow house with green shutters on Yoga-

nanda Street was torn down Monday, Newtown Legislative Council Chair Mary Ann Jacob said. Everything inside the home, including rugs and lighting fixtures, had previously been removed and incinerated so that no remnants were available to become memorabilia.

The Lanza family moved from southern New Hampshire and bought the new house in 1998. The property was given to the town in December by a bank that acquired it from the Lanza family. Since the shooting more than two years ago, the house stood vacant. □

## Dallas death points to dangers of black-market cosmetic work

**DAVID WARREN**

**Associated Press**

**DALLAS (AP)** — The recent death of a Dallas woman who had received injections at a salon to expand the size of her buttocks follows other cosmetic-related deaths around the U.S. that authorities say were caused by people who either weren't licensed or who injected substances not approved by federal regulators.

The family of Wykesha Reid, 34, says she died after visiting the salon on Feb. 18, her fourth time for a cosmetic procedure. What happened in the hours after the final injection remains unclear, but police responding to an emergency call found her body the next morning at the business. Dallas police have charged two salon workers for not being licensed for the injection procedure. "Everybody else got big booties," Reid's mother, Patricia Kelley, told The Dallas Morning News. "So she wanted a big booty." Liquid silicone is not approved for many uses by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, so doctors often won't perform buttocks injections. Other legal procedures can be pricey, so those seeking to modify their bodies often seek out cheaper ways to obtain a desired shape. While the FDA says tallies are not kept on complaints stemming from black-market injections, deaths from the procedures have been reported in recent years in California, Georgia, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York and elsewhere.

A notorious case in Philadelphia ended this month with the murder conviction of Padge-Victoria Windslowe, a madam-turned-faux cosmetic surgeon. Prosecutors in the case said strippers, transgender women and "regular girls" who sought injections at "pumping parties" and airport hotels were young and vulnerable.

And in December, a South Texas woman was sentenced to three years in prison for the death of a customer injected with liquid silicone at the woman's spa. Prosecutors say Elva Navarro admitted she didn't tell the victim that similar injections had caused health complications for other customers.

"It is not often that someone comes forward to file a complaint with the Medical Board after undergoing those procedures," Texas Medical Board spokesman Jarrett Schneider said. "When someone is engaging in the unlicensed practice of medicine we can issue a cease-and-desist order against them if we have enough information and evidence. However, it is ultimately a criminal matter before law enforcement." □



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## US Financial Front:

# High nursing home bills squeeze insurers, driving rates up

**MATTHEW CRAFT**  
**Associated Press**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Thirty years ago, insurance companies had the answer to the soaring cost of caring for the elderly. Plan ahead and buy a policy that will cover your expenses.

Now, there's a new problem: Even insurers think it's unaffordable.

Life insurance firms pitched long-term care policies as the prudent way for Americans to shoulder the cost of staying in nursing homes. But those same companies have found that long-term-care policies are squeezing their profits. Earnings for life insurers slid 11 percent in the most recent quarter, according to Moody's Investors Service, and long-term care was the chief culprit.

"Insurers that sell these products lose money on them," says Vincent Lui, a life-insurance analyst at Morningstar. "So they're raising prices and also try-

ing to get out of the business right and left."

Four of the five largest providers — including Manulife and MetLife — have either scaled back their business or stopped selling new policies, according to Moody's. The largest provider, Genworth Financial, continues to offer them, yet has struggled under the weight of rising costs.

The trends behind the industry's troubles sound like good news outside the world of insurance. Older Americans are healthier and living longer. But that makes it difficult for the industry to turn a profit. Stays in nursing homes tend to last longer, so insurers have to pay out more in benefits than they had planned.

For older Americans and their families, however, there are few options besides private insurance. Medicare doesn't cover nursing home stays except in certain circumstances. The Obama Administra-



**Tina Reese leads a word game for residents at a nursing home in Lancaster, Pa. Life insurance firms pitched long-term care policies as the prudent way for Americans to shoulder the cost of staying in nursing homes. But those same companies have found that long-term-care policies are squeezing their profits.**

(AP Photo/Dan Marschka)

tion had planned to make a long-term insurance program part of the Affordable Care Act but eventually abandoned it.

Sean Dargan, an analyst at Macquarie Group, an Australia-based investment bank, expects to see more people turning to Medicaid, the government's health insurance for the

poor, to cover the costs of care.

"It could really blow a hole through state budgets," he says. "I think states and the federal government are going to need to think creatively to find a way out of this."

For insurance companies, long-term care has proven to be a tough business.

Genworth, based in Richmond, Virginia, has turned in losses for two straight quarters. On March 2, the company reported that it discovered errors in its accounting for funds set aside to cover long-term care claims, knocking its stock down 5 percent in a single day. Analysts say problems with these policies explain why Genworth has lost more than half its market value over the past year, plunging from \$17 to a recent \$7.79.

"Their single biggest product is long-term care, and look at their share price," Lui says. "It's one trouble after another."

In an interview with The Associated Press, Tom McInerney, Genworth's CEO, says his company has been taking steps to make long-term care insurance a viable business, raising prices on older policies, introducing new products and throwing out their previous assumptions. □





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## Official: US-led aircraft flying over IS-held Tikrit

**VIVIAN SALAMA  
QASSIM ZAHRA  
Associated Press**

**TIKRIT, Iraq (AP)** — The U.S.-led coalition battling the Islamic State group has begun surveillance flights over the northern Iraqi town of Tikrit, a senior coalition official said Tuesday, marking the first time the alliance has taken part in a major offensive there that is being spearheaded by Iranian-backed Shiite militias.

The official said the flights and intelligence sharing began Saturday and were requested by the Iraqi government. He declined to comment on whether the

coalition was carrying out airstrikes, saying he cannot discuss current or future operations. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to journalists. Up to now the offensive to take back Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown, has largely been waged by Iraqi troops and Shiite militias advised by Gen. Qassem Soleimani, commander of the elite Quds Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guard. The coalition official declined to discuss whether U.S. forces were directly communicating with Iranians on the ground there. Both the U.S. and



**A U.S. military plane takes off from the flight deck of the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf. U.S. aircraft aboard the Carl Vinson as well as French military jets aboard the nearby French carrier Charles de Gaulle are flying missions over Iraq in the fight against Islamic State militants.**  
(AP Photo/Hasan Jamali)

Iran view the Islamic State group as a major threat but insist they are not coordinating their actions. The U.S. had previously said it was not taking part in the Tikrit offensive because it had received no request to do so from Baghdad. The U.S.-led air campaign, launched in August, has allowed Iraqi forces to halt the IS group's advance and claw back some of the territory it seized last summer.

But the growing Iranian presence on the ground has complicated the mission, with Washington refusing to work directly with a country it views as a regional menace. The prominent role of the Shiite militias in the fight to retake Tikrit and other parts of Iraq's Sunni heartland has meanwhile raised concerns that the offensive could deepen the country's sectarian divide and drive Sunnis into the arms of the Islamic State group.

A senior Iraqi military official said the coalition is not providing airstrikes in support of the Tikrit operation, but launched airstrikes on the nearby oil refinery town of Beiji on Tuesday. He added that Soleimani had just left Tikrit after providing front-line assistance and advising since the start of the operation.

"He will come back if we need him to," said the Iraqi official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he's not authorized to brief journalists. Iran has provided military advisers and weapons to Iraqi troops and Shiite militias, and last year it carried out airstrikes near its border in Iraq's Diyala province. The Sunni city of Tikrit lies about 130 kilometers (80 miles) north of Baghdad. It

is one of the largest cities held by the Islamic State group and lies on the road connecting Baghdad to militant-held Mosul, the country's second-largest city. U.S. military officials have said a coordinated mission to retake Mosul likely will begin in April or May and involve up to 25,000 Iraqi troops. But the Americans have cautioned that if the Iraqis are not ready, the offensive could be delayed. The U.S. and other coalition members have been providing weapons and training to Iraqi and Kurdish forces in the north in an effort to prepare them for the battle ahead.

The Tikrit operation is the largest to date and requires careful air and ground coordination in order to minimize civilian casualties and damage to the city's infrastructure. □

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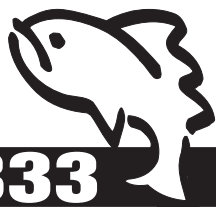


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## Greece plans to present EU with overhauls by Monday

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NIKI KITSANTONIS  
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**BERLIN** - Greece will present a detailed list of proposed overhauls to its eurozone partners by Monday, a government spokesman said, as Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras met supporters and leading government ministers on his first official visit to Europe's economic powerhouse, Germany. Tsipras has cut an unusual figure among European leaders since being elected less than two

months ago. After stopping his convoy en route to Angela Merkel's chancellery Monday to greet friendly demonstrators, on Tuesday he visited the stark memorial in central Berlin to the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust. It is rare for visiting leaders to stop at the 2,711 blocks of stone that make up the memorial to Europe's murdered Jews. The visit to the memorial next to the Brandenburg Gate followed more than five hours of talks and

dinner with Merkel on Monday. It also came after more meetings Tuesday with the two leading Social Democrats in Merkel's coalition as well as with opposition leftists sympathetic to Tsipras and his pleas for a new approach to Greece's debt crisis. A Greek government spokesman, Gavriil Sakkellaris, told Mega TV that a list of overhauls would "be done by Monday at the latest." There was no indication whether the list had

been discussed in any detail with Merkel. Her spokesman, Steffen Seibert, said Monday's talks had taken place "in a good and constructive atmosphere," covering Greece's situation, how the European Union works and bilateral cooperation. At an evening news conference barely an hour into the talks, both leaders urged their compatriots to abandon stereotypes about each other's countries. While guarded, they were clearly at pains to reduce the acrimony that has clouded the new Greek government's dealings with Germany and its other eurozone partners in re-

cent weeks. One issue that has flared up is that of German reparations for the Nazi crimes committed during the occupation of Greece in World War II. Tens of thousands of Greeks were killed, and an estimated 80,000 Greek Jews were deported to concentration camps. The Nazis also exacted a forced loan from Greece that was not repaid in full. Tsipras raised the loan as a matter of what he called ethical and moral concern. But he emphasized that "today's Germany has nothing to do with the Germany of the Third Reich, which cost so much bloodshed." □

## Cameron rules out 3<sup>rd</sup> term as PM of Britain

STEPHEN CASTLE  
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**LONDON** - Just over six weeks before seeking a second term in May's general election, Prime Minister David Cameron of Britain has ruled out serving a third, in a declaration that provoked surprise as well as criticism and put his Conservative Party on the defensive. In a wide-ranging interview with the BBC on Monday, Cameron said he would run for a full second term, but added, "The third term is not something I am contemplating," a stance that could undermine his authority if he secures an election victory May 7. Likening prime ministerial terms to portions of a breakfast cereal, Cameron said they were "like Shredded Wheat: two are wonderful but three might just be too many." He even went on to name potential successors, like Theresa May, the home secretary; George Osborne, the chancellor of

the Exchequer; and Boris Johnson, the mayor of London. There is no limit in Britain on the number of terms a prime minister can serve, and the issue occasionally raises problems for leaders who discuss their long-term ambitions. Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher once famously courted controversy by saying that she would go "on and on." She was ultimately deposed by members of her own party in 1990. James Landale, the deputy political editor of BBC News, who conducted the interview with Cameron, later wrote that his idea appeared to be to "get across the message" that he would serve a full five-year term if he won in May, and that he would not step down midway through it. There has been speculation that a victorious Cameron would quit after holding a referendum on whether Britain should remain in the European

Union. Cameron has promised that a referendum on that issue will be held by the end of 2017. If putting an end to such speculation was the intention, the comments appeared to have backfired. In a statement issued Monday, Douglas Alexander, the head of general election strategy for the opposition Labour Party, accused the Conservatives of "taking the British public for granted." "It is typically arrogant of David Cameron to presume a third Tory term in 2020 before the British public have been given the chance to have their say in this election," the statement said. But the prime minister's allies defended him. The defense secretary, Michael Fallon, described Cameron's comment as "a fairly straight answer" and "a fairly obvious answer." "There is a shelf life to any politician," Fallon told the BBC. "Nobody is absolutely indispensable." □

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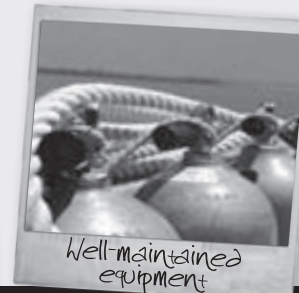


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# US troops driving through Poland get warm welcome

**ALEKSANDER KEPLICZ  
MONIKA SCISLOWSKA**

**Associated Press**

**BIALYSTOK, Poland (AP)**

— Hundreds of residents turned out in eastern Poland on Tuesday to greet a convoy of U.S. troops that is driving through eastern Europe, a region worried that the conflict in Ukraine threatens its security. Children climbed into the Stryker armored vehicles and residents offered regional souvenirs as the crowd gathered in the main square of Bialystok under sunny skies, applauding troops from the 3rd Squadron of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment for their gesture of reassurance to a NATO ally. Poland borders Ukraine and Russia, and the conflict in eastern Ukraine has caused anxiety here.

"This really means a lot to



**People surround a group of US Army Stryker armored vehicles from the 3rd Squadron of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, during a stop on the Kosciuszko Market Square to meet residents, in Bialystok, Poland, Tuesday, March 24, 2015, as they drive back from the Atlantic Resolve exercise.**

**(AP Photo/Alik Keplicz)**

us. We see that we are not alone, that there is some-

one to defend us," Zdzislaw Narel, 60, told The Associ-

ated Press. "This is really a historic moment."

"You make us feel like movie stars," a U.S. soldier was heard saying from atop a Stryker.

The "Dagoon Ride" convoy of dozens of armored vehicles started last week from Estonia and passed through Latvia and Lithuania before entering Poland, on a 1,700-kilometer (1,000-mile) return journey to a base in Vilseck, Germany. They took part in the Atlantic Resolve exercise intended to demonstrate NATO's readiness to defend its members.

Poland is also beefing up its own defenses through exercises with NATO troops and through training its own reservists. As part of a mobilization exercise, hundreds of reservists summoned on a few hours' notice were reporting to a military base in Tarnowskie Gory in southern Poland. □

## Putin reviews war games, says more drills will come

**V. ISACHENKOV  
Associated Press**

**MOSCOW (AP)** — President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that a recent Russian military exercise has marked the beginning of a series of such drills this year, a show of force that comes amid a bitter strain with the West

over Ukraine.

Reflecting the tensions, U.S. and other NATO forces staged maneuvers in the Baltics, and a convoy of U.S. troops has driven through eastern Europe in a bid to reassure the allies. Last week's Russian maneuvers that spread from

the Arctic to the Black Sea involved 80,000 troops, about 100 navy ships and more than 220 aircraft. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to Putin Tuesday that the maneuvers were aimed at checking the readiness of the newly formed group of

forces in the Arctic, as well as the military's capability to quickly field troops to several theaters of operations.

"I proceed from the assumption that this was just the start of efforts to train the armed forces," Putin said. □



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# Arab-Israeli political leaders reject Netanyahu's apology



Israeli Arab men play cards in the city of Ramla, Israel. Israeli Arabs emerged from this week's parliament election with more political clout but also a greater sense of exclusion, after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rallied his supporters by portraying Arab voters as a threat. (AP Photo/Dan Balilty)

**DANIEL ESTRIN**  
Associated Press

**JERUSALEM (AP)** — Arab political leaders in Israel on Tuesday rejected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's apology for comments he made in last week's national elections that offended members of the Arab community and said his words made him unsuitable to return for a third consecutive term on the job.

The spat has touched on longstanding claims of discrimination by Israel's Arab minority, which makes up 20 percent of the Jewish

state, and signaled that the rift will not be healed anytime soon. An Arab advocacy center in Israel said the country's national elections brought an "unprecedented level of racist incitement" against the minority community.

In the heat of a close race last week, Netanyahu posted a video on his Facebook page where he implored his hard-line supporters to head to the polls, saying that "left-wing organizations" were bussing Arabs to the polls "in droves." The comments drew accusations of racism from Arab

voters and a White House rebuke. The footage of the apology, filmed by Likud, shows Netanyahu saying

to a gathering of Arab officials on Monday: "I know that what I said a few days ago offended some of Is-

rael's citizens, offended Israeli Arabs. I had no intention of doing so. I am sorry for this."□



## Shiite rebels fire on protesters in south Yemen, leaving 6 dead

**AHMED AL-HAJ**  
Associated Press

**SANAA, Yemen (AP)** — Shiite rebels fired bullets and tear gas Tuesday to disperse thousands of protesters demanding they withdraw from a southwestern province, killing six demonstrators, wounding scores more and escalating tensions in a country on the verge of civil war.

The rebels, known as Houthis, seized the capital Sanaa in September and have been advancing south alongside forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. In recent days they have closed in on the southern port city of Aden, where the internationally recognized President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi is now based.

Massive protests were held in the third largest city of Taiz — which the rebels largely seized over the weekend — and in Torba, some 60 miles (100

kilometers) away, where witnesses said the streets were filled with thick black smoke from burning fires and where protesters torched three armored vehicles. "Torba turned into a ball of fire," said Khaled al-Asswadi, a resident. He said the protesters prevented the Houthis from advancing into the city.

A medical official said six protesters were killed and dozens wounded in Torba. Local activists posted pictures on social media of what they said were dead protesters, their clothes drenched in blood.

Another witness, Mohammed Salem, said the Houthis and Saleh's forces fired anti-aircraft guns to scare off the protesters, "but the number of protesters increased instead." In a statement, Yemen's Socialist Party warned that the Houthis' invasion of the mostly Sunni south would set off a "sectarian war."□

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**Sundays**

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**End of month**

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## Barbados planning to replace queen as head of state

**CAROL WILLIAMS**  
**DAVID McFADDEN**  
**Associated Press**

**BRIDGETOWN, Barbados (AP)** — Barbados plans to remove Queen Elizabeth II as titular head of state and replace her with a ceremonial president from the Caribbean island, a former British territory once known as "Little England" for its colonial trappings.

Prime Minister Freundel Stuart announced that the plan is to make Barbados a republic by November 2016 when the island of roughly 300,000 people celebrates its 50th anniversary of independence. He said it makes no sense to keep the monarch as the head of state of an otherwise independent country. "It's a little awkward in the year 2015 to still have to stand up and instead of pledging allegiance to Barbados to be pledging allegiance to 'her majesty the queen,'" Stuart said during a late Sunday meeting of his ruling Democratic Labour Party.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said Monday that "it is a matter for the government and people of Barbados." British Prime Minister David Cameron's spokesman said he expected the approach in Barbados to be "consistent with self-determination." The republican debate has raged for years in Barbados between older islanders who see the queen as

a symbol of stability, and mostly younger nationalists who call her an anachronism. It echoes similar debates in many countries that once were part of the British empire and retained the queen as their head of state after independence. In the Caribbean, former British colonies including

said the queen was a "lovely lady" but insisted her country must remove the monarch as head of state, in part because of slavery's legacy. But nothing has changed since Simpson Miller made that statement. In Barbados, historian Trevor Marshall welcomed Stu-

that majority in the senate, but not in the lower house. Opposition leader Mia Motley did not immediately comment on Stuart's plans. Barbados was among the few islands settled in 1605 by English colonists who imported slaves from Africa. While other Caribbean islands were swapped as



**This January 2015 photo shows a beach in Speightstown, Barbados. Barbados plans to remove Queen Elizabeth II as titular head of state and replace her with a ceremonial president from the Caribbean island, a former British territory once known as "Little England" for its colonial trappings.**  
(AP Photo/Kavitha Surana)

Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago have established republican forms of government.

But others such as Barbados and Jamaica have not replaced the queen with another head of state even though their officials have called for the tie to be severed.

Upon taking power in early 2012, Jamaica Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller

art's announcement, arguing there is "nothing to be gained by remaining as a dominion."

Despite the change, Barbados would remain in the Commonwealth grouping of former British colonies, according to Stuart.

Barbados needs a two-thirds majority in Parliament to authorize the constitutional change. Stuart's government currently has

war booty among Spanish, British, Dutch and French colonizers, Barbados remained British during the colonial years.

But in a sign of changing times, Barbados adopted the Caribbean Court of Justice as its final court of appeal in 2005, dumping the London-based Privy Council that long served as the court of last resort for many former colonies. □

## CARIBBEAN News Briefs

### Russian FM visits Cuba, suggests end to embargo

**HAVANA (AP)** — Russian Foreign Minister Serguei Lavrov has launched a tour of Latin America with a stop in Cuba, where he has called for an end to the U.S. embargo against the island nation. The official website Cubadebate says Lavrov discussed bilateral cooperation on Tuesday with Ricardo Cabrisas, vice president of the Council of Ministers. He was to meet later with Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez. Cubadebate quotes Lavrov as saying that Russia will work with Cuba to help end the U.S. trade sanctions. He also says that Russian companies are interested in investing in the Caribbean country's development. Lavrov will later travel on to Colombia, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

### Police: Australian doctor stabbed to death in Bahamas

**SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)** — Authorities in the Bahamas say a well-known podiatrist from Australia has been found stabbed to death at his upscale home. A police official who was not authorized to release the information said Phillip Vasyli was found dead Tuesday in the wealthy Old Fort Bay community on New Providence Island. The official said no one has been charged. Vasyli established three podiatry clinics in Sydney and later founded an orthotic footwear company that sells products in the U.S., the United Kingdom and elsewhere. He also ran a nonprofit organization to help improve the health of those from poor communities. Vasyli was married with two children. □

## Venezuela to probe suspicious offshore holdings

**CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)** — Venezuela is asking foreign governments to share information about large offshore bank deposits amid a spate of reports that \$2 billion was siphoned off by corrupt, top-level officials at state-run oil com-

pany PDVSA. Chief prosecutor Luisa Ortega Diaz's announcement Tuesday was the socialist government's first response to the determination this month by U.S. Treasury that a bank in the European principality of An-

dorra was used to launder money on behalf of groups in China, Russia and Venezuela. The investigation found that Banca Privada d'Andorra charged exorbitant commissions to create shell companies and complex financial products on

behalf of PDVSA. The designation led the bank's Spanish unit to file for bankruptcy. Ortega Diaz didn't say who was being probed and dismissed calls that she was forced into action by the opposition. □





## Huge Group of Loyal Visitors Honored at Aruba Beach Club



**EAGLE BEACH** - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a very nice group of guests whom are loyal visitors of Aruba, as Emerald Ambassadors, Goodwill Ambassadors and Distinguished Visitors at their home away from home! The honorees were Edwin

and Patricia of Connecticut, John and Marion of New York, Robert and Zallee of Rhode Island, Rick Accorto of Florida, Richard and Cheryl of Vermont, and Mike and Nancy, Kris and Jessica, and John and Carol, all of Massachusetts! The symbolic honorary titles are presented in the name

of the Minister of Tourism, Transportation, Primary Sector and Culture. Mr. O. Oduber as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba between 10-19 years, 20-34 years, and 35-or-more years consecutive.

Ms. Darline S. de Cuba representing Aruba Tourism Authority together with Kenia Brito conducted the ceremony at the Aruba Beach Club.

The top reasons for returning year after year are they consider Aruba to be the 'Happy Island,' the great weather and friendly Aruban hospitality.

Congratulations to all, you truly make a difference in the Aruban community and hold a special place in our hearts! □





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## Representing 35 Years of Visiting Aruba: ATA Presents Commemorative Emerald Coin to Family Lutzker



**DRUIF BEACH** - Recently the Lutzker family was awarded a well-deserved Emerald Coin, representing and honoring their 35 consecutive years of visiting the island.

During a special reception held in honor of this commemorative event, Mr. Aaron Lutzker and his wife Mrs. Karen Lutzker were honored with the special Emerald Coin accompanied with the title Emerald Ambassadors,



which certificate was presented to them by Mrs. Darline de Cuba, representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Brisley Flanegin Front Office Manager and Astrid Muller General Manager of Caribbean Palm Village.

The Lutzker family is well known on the island, especially for Mrs. Lutzker's history of reaching out to the Aruban community. Mr. & Mrs. Lutzker are from Tampa, Florida and their main reason for returning year after year is not only because they feel Aruba is their 'home-away-from-

home,' but also due to the great weather and the friendly Aruban hospitality. The symbolic honorary title is presented to the Lutzker family on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, Transportation, Primary Sector and Culture Mr. O. Oduber as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 35-or-more consecutive years.

Mr. and Mrs. Lutzker also celebrated their 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Aruba: Congratulations!

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## Sidebar changes Aruba's restaurant scene with its flavorful gourmet burgers

**ORANJESTAD** - Take a burger of one hundred percent prime Angus beef, add to that the freshest possible extras and tastiest sauces and voila: here is your gourmet burger. Sidebar, a newly opened, great restaurant in the Renaissance Marketplace in downtown Oranjestad, knows how to tease your taste buds with the best burgers imaginable.

*"After two meals and one take out experience, I'm ready to COMMIT. This hip, casual place manages to pull off a great contribution to the latest fad....burgers."*

**Zforall, Sarasota, FL-USA**  
TripAdvisor - January 5th, 2015

Sidebar's signature burgers have been named The Sidebar, The Afterburner, The Goliath, The Texan, The Chaser, The Primal and The Italian Job and we are sure that everyone will be able to find a burger that calls out to them. The burgers come with brie cheese, prosciutto, Cheddar cheese, zucchini, sliced steak, Bourbon bbq sauce, dripping gravy and much more, depending on your order. The best thing is that these gourmet beauties cost less than \$ 15.--, so lunch or an evening out won't break the bank.

Feel love for Sidebar's burgers; they are bursting with taste— try them all and find your personal favorite. Come on down to Sidebar and rock your Wildest West with a fabulously tasty burger that packs a punch with its layers of flavor. And if you are not in a burger mood, then Sidebar has a wonderfully varied menu of all kinds of other options, ranging from vegetarian mushrooms and spinach to a zucchini cutlet to lovely salads, homemade soups, pastas and fish dishes.

Wash your lunch or dinner down with a premium, aged Bourbon or try the ice-cold beers on tap to slake your thirst. You can choose between Heineken, Balashi, Chill, Stella Artois, Miller Light or Presidente. Come inside, at the bar or sit outside on the terrace; at Sidebar there will always be a place for you.



Picture: "THE TEXAN" GOURMET BURGER

## Gilbert and Nicolina George honored at the Marriott Surf Club



**PALM BEACH** - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a very nice couple as Distinguished Visitors at the Marriott Surf Club. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as

a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10-to-19 consecutive years. The honorees were Mr. Gilbert and Mrs. Nicolina George from Southbridge, Massachusetts. Gilbert and Nicolina and their son Joe are loyal



members of the Marriott Surf Club and they love Aruba very much because of the friendly people, the climate, beaches, restaurants, relaxation and being on Aruba and staying at the Surf Club is like being home for them. The certifi-

cates were presented by Mr. Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Mrs. Nayda Lopez Feliciano who is like a daughter to the George couple and Mrs. Jenny Boekhoudt representing the Marriott Surf Club. □





**FULL THROTTLE**  
ISLAND STYLE

*Enjoy the Ride*

This week's ride is actually from our sister island Curacao, who was visiting for a ride that took place on our island Aruba. It's a 2008 Harley Davidson Road King from our friend Derrem Senchi, with a lot of modifications on the list as we can see. What stands out is the 30 inches SMT "Silencer" billet front wheel who fills that custom front end nicely and the beach steering bar with custom mirrors. Most of chrome accessories come from SMT like the floorboards and handgrips. As a custom Bagger needs those extended bags, this is done 8 inches with a set of Clarion speakers incorporated on top. Yes, of course the tanks are also stretched to complete the look, with an I-Pod hooked up on the dash. To make the ride comfortable is that "Air Ride"

air suspension which also drops the bike till the ground when parked and the "Danny Gray" seat. Engine remained stock with a 3 inch BDL open belt primary but otherwise breaths thru a custom air filter, and a Dynojet air/fuel management for the sparks and blows it out thru an "LMF" exhaust from Dirtybird, which also has a flamethrower installed for the cool factor. Last, but not least, that cool fully airbrushed paint job, that represents an eagle from the front till the back. We hope to see this beauty soon back on our roads, with any more modifications? Perhaps.





Story & pictures by Alberto Arrindell



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**BASARI ARUBA**

## Loyal Guests Honored by Aruba Tourism Authority!

**EAGLE BEACH** - Recently a group of loyal Aruba visitors were honored at the Divi Village Resort and the Bucuti Beach Resort for their many years of repeat visiting to the island of Aruba! Jonathan Boekhoudt with Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to present Mike Ahern with the Goodwill Ambassador Certificate commemorating over 20 years of consecutive visits. Paul Johnson, Robert Shea, and Joseph and Eileen Rocchio were presented with Distinguished Visitor Certificates commemorating between 10-19 years of consecutive visits. They all love Aruba very much because of the friendly people, the climate, beaches, restaurants, and relaxation, and

being on Aruba is like being home for them. The cer-

tificates were presented by Mr. Jonathan Boekhoudt

representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together

with friends and staff from their resorts! ☐







# HOT CURRY

## Warriors rip Wizards behind dominant 3rd

Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry, right, passes behind the back of Washington Wizards center Marcin Gortat (4) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Oakland, Calif., Monday, March 23, 2015.

Associated Press  
Page 18

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## Warriors smother Wizards in 3rd quarter for 107-76 win

**The Associated Press**  
**OAKLAND, California (AP)** — Stephen Curry had 24 points as the Golden State

**Golden State Warriors forward Harrison Barnes, left, controls the ball under Washington Wizards forward Martell Webster (9) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Oakland, Calif., Monday, March 23, 2015.**

Associated Press

Warriors used a smothering defensive effort in the third quarter to pound the Washington Wizards 107-76 on Monday.

The Warriors held the Wizards without a field goal for nearly 11 minutes after half-time, with Washington missing its first 15 shots. Golden State outscored the Wizards 29-8 in the quarter to take a 24-point lead.

Curry also had six assists and five rebounds as the NBA-leading Warriors (57-13) moved closer to securing the league's top playoff seed.

Golden State has a huge lead over Memphis (50-21) in the Western Conference and is pulling away from East-leading Atlanta (53-17) as well.

It was a season low in points for Washington, which has lost three in a row.

Bradley Beal scored 12 points, and John Wall finished with 11 points, five assists and five rebounds for the Wizards, who shot 33.3 percent.

### **CELTICS 110, NETS 91**

**BOSTON (AP)** — Evan Turner had 19 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds as the Celtics snapped a three-game losing streak that had dropped them out of playoff position.

Avery Bradley scored 20 points to lead the Celtics, who moved a half-game ahead of Charlotte for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. The Hornets lost 98-86 at Chicago.

Tyler Zeller and Kelly Olynyk each had 18 points for Boston, which bounced back from a 105-97 overtime loss to Detroit at home on Sunday. Coach Brad Stevens said he felt his players tight-

ened up in that game, but they had a mostly stress-free second half Monday after quickly pulling away in the third quarter.

Brook Lopez scored 31 points for the Nets, who had won two in a row to give themselves renewed playoff hopes. But they endured bad nights all over the roster, from Joe Johnson (3 for 11) to Jarrett Jack (1 for 9) to Alan Anderson (2 for 9).

### **ROCKETS 110, PACERS 100**

**INDIANAPOLIS (AP)** — James Harden scored 19 of his 44 points in the fourth quarter as the Rockets handed the Pacers their sixth straight loss.

Josh Smith added 18 points for the Rockets (47-23), who have won four of five. Indiana's sinking playoff hopes took another big hit despite 23 points from C.J. Watson. George Hill had 20 points for the Pacers (30-40).

Harden, one of the favorites for the NBA MVP award, was 10 of 21 from the field and 21 for 22 from the free-throw line. He also had seven assists and four rebounds.

### **BULLS 98, HORNETS 86**

**CHICAGO (AP)** — Nikola Mirotic scored 14 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter as the Bulls clinched a playoff spot.

Pau Gasol had 27 points and 12 rebounds as Chicago moved into a tie with Toronto for third place in the Eastern Conference.

**In the other NBA games it was Houston 110, Indiana 100; Boston 110, Brooklyn 91; Memphis 103, New York 82; Chicago 98, Charlotte 86; Minnesota 106, Utah 104, OT; and Golden State 107, Washington 76.** □

# March Madness

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### NHL Capsules

## Kopitar has goal, 2 assists, Kings end skid, beat Devils

The Associated Press

NEWARK, New Jersey (AP)

— Anze Kopitar had a goal and two assists as the defending Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings beat the New Jersey Devils 3-1 on Monday at the start of a five-game trip.

Andrej Sekera and Tyler Toffoli also scored for the Kings, who are on the outside of the Western Conference playoff picture. Marian Gaborik added two assists, and Jonathan Quick made 19 saves as Los Angeles won for only the second time in five games.

Scott Gomez scored for the Devils, who lost their second straight game. Cory Schneider made 30 saves for New Jersey, which is in danger of missing the playoffs for the third straight season. The game also marked the return of veteran center Mike Richards to the Kings lineup after he spent 16 games with Manchester of the AHL.

**BLACKHAWKS 3, HURRICANES 1**

RALEIGH, North Carolina (AP) — Andrew Shaw scored two goals as Chicago held off Carolina.

Corey Crawford made 43 saves for the Blackhawks, who have earned a point in 18 of their past 21 games and are fourth in the Western Conference. Shaw scored in the first period and added an empty-net goal with 40 seconds left.

Patrick Sharp had a goal and assist, and Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville earned his 750th NHL victory. Chicago improved to 23-0 when leading after two periods.

Victor Rask cut Carolina's deficit in half early in the second period, and Anton

Khudobin made 22 saves for the Hurricanes, who out-shot Chicago 44-25.

**SENATORS 5, BLACKHAWKS 2**

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Mika Zibanejad scored twice as Ottawa moved into an Eastern Conference playoff position with a victory over San Jose.

The Senators earned their seventh straight win and jumped one point ahead of Boston for the second wild-card spot in the East with a game in hand. Ottawa is above the postseason

cutoff for the first time since late November.

Alex Chiasson, Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Mike Hoffman, with an empty-net goal, also scored for Ottawa. Andrew Hammond, making his seventh straight start, stopped 29 shots.

Joe Pavelski and Chris Tierney scored for the Sharks. Antti Niemi made 32 saves. The Senators scored four unanswered goals in the third period — two within a span of 1:12.

**WILD 2, MAPLE LEAFS 1**

TORONTO (AP) — Devan



Dallas Stars center Cody Eakin (20) scores a goal against Buffalo Sabres goalie Anders Lindback (35) and defenseman Mike Weber (6) during the third period of an NHL hockey game Monday, March 23, 2015, in Dallas. The Stars won 4-3.

Associated Press

Dubnyk added to his iron-man streak, making his 32nd straight start as Minnesota extended its string of road wins to nine, hanging on for a victory over slumping Toronto.

The loss was the sixth straight

for the Maple Leafs, who came close several times to tying it late.

Charlie Coyle and Thomas Vanek scored for Minnesota, which is 23-6-2 since acquiring Dubnyk on Jan. 14. □

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# Augusta National getting too crowded for its liking

**DOUG FERGUSON**

**AP Golf Writer**

**ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)** — Matt Every needed a victory at Bay Hill to get into the Masters, and he was only being honest when he shared what he was thinking as Henrik Stenson faced a birdie putt on the final hole to force a playoff.

"You're already in. Miss it. I need to get in."

Augusta National would have had reason to root for Stenson.

It has managed to keep the field at the Masters under 100 players for nearly 50 years, a streak that is in serious jeopardy going into the final two weeks. Every was the fourth PGA Tour winner in the last six weeks to qualify for the Masters.

That brings the total to 95



**Matt Every, right, acknowledges the gallery as Arnold Palmer watches after being presented with the winner's jacket after the Arnold Palmer Invitational golf tournament in Orlando, Fla., Sunday, March 22, 2015.**

**Associated Press**

players at Augusta — including Tiger Woods, the great unknown — heading into a pivotal week.

This is the second and final cutoff for players not already eligible for the Mas-

ters to qualify through the top 50 in the world ranking. Three players in the top 50 are virtually assured of staying there — Anirban Lahiri of India (No. 35), Bernd Wiesberger of Austria (No.

41) and Branden Grace of South Africa (No. 43).

So that makes 98.

Marc Warren of Scotland (52), Harris English (53) and Alex Levy of France (54) are all playing this week either in the Texas Open or the Hassan Trophy in Morocco. The Masters also will take the winners of the Texas Open and Houston Open the following week if they're not yet eligible.

Depending on two tournaments on opposite ends of the world — and depending on Woods — the Masters could have more than 100 players for the first time since there were 103 players in 1966.

The other three majors have 156 players. The other three majors are not the Masters.

From its inception in 1934, Augusta National was meant to be exclusive in so many ways, including its invitation-only tournament each spring that has grown up to be must-see TV around the world. The club believes a limited field enhances the experience of the players.

The century mark has been challenged four of the last five years, and Augusta National is paying attention.

"It is borderline to be able to present the kind of competition that we want to," Masters chairman Billy Payne said in 2011 when there were 99 players. "It is more than we normally have. We say every year in response to that question that we look and we study the qualifications, which we do. But we are really going to look at it this year, because there is a maximum number of competitors for which we can give the experience that we want them to have and do it in a way that's manageable."

"The 100 pushes that limit quite significantly."

Augusta National does not rush into changes, but it does react. Two years later, Payne announced changes aimed at keeping the field below 100 players. It wisely kept winners from PGA Tour stand-

alone events, including the six held during the fall start of the season. It also eliminated the category of top 30 on the money list. It reduced the top finishers at the previous Masters from top 16 to top 12, and at the U.S. Open from the top eight to the top four.

More help is on the way. Ben Crenshaw is playing his final Masters. It won't be long — maybe next year — before Tom Watson chooses to no longer play. And this is the final year of the U.S. Amateur Public Links, so that spot effectively is awarded to the winner of the new Latin America Amateur Championship.

Changes, however, are most likely coming as golf gets deeper and the Masters field gets bigger.

It would be a mistake for the club to stop awarding invitations to PGA Tour winners. In an era of \$7 million purses, there should be no greater motivation than winning.

A trip to the Masters is usually the first thing a PGA Tour winner mentions (see Matt Every).

Also, the Masters should continue to rely on the world ranking to provide opportunity to players from every corner of the world. That category is loaded with international players, and there's a reason for that. PGA Tour members have plenty of other avenues to get to the Masters. The world ranking, however, allows for one change that is overdue.

Perhaps it's time to get rid of the first cutoff for the top 50 at the end of a calendar year, and simply have one deadline at the end of the Florida swing. That still allows two weeks for players to plan a trip to Augusta. And the tournament is more likely to have the top players in form.

Dating to 2008, when the Masters returned to its policy of awarding spots to PGA Tour winners, an average of nearly three players per year were among the top 50 at the end of the year and failed to stay in the top 50 at the end of March. □

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# Rich get richer: Mayweather and Pacquiao purses soar



Floyd Mayweather Jr., left, and Manny Pacquiao, of the Philippines, pose for photos after a news conference Wednesday, March 11, 2015, in Los Angeles. The two are scheduled to fight in Las Vegas on May 2.

**TIM DAHLBERG**  
AP Boxing Writer

**LAS VEGAS (AP)** — The first ticket has yet to be sold, but the richest fight in boxing history is getting richer by the day.

New estimates show Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s payoff for fighting Manny Pacquiao could easily be \$180 million, up substantially from earlier predictions of \$120 million. Pacquiao gets the short end of the purse, but even that is expected to be well over \$100 million by the time everything is tallied up.

The money is staggering, though not exactly unexpected. Five years of waiting seem to have only piqued the public's demand for the one fight even casual fans of the sport want to see.

"For whatever it's worth, the buildup over these years has certainly enhanced the fight," promoter Bob Arum. "Everybody knows about it now, even people who don't follow boxing. Plus we have a good economy, unlike in 2009 when people were out of work and didn't have the money to spend."

Fans will certainly have to pay a price to see the May 2 welterweight title bout, especially those lucky enough to score a ticket inside the MGM Grand

arena itself.

Ticket prices there range from \$1,500 in the upper deck to \$7,500 at ringside — and only a small percentage of the tickets will actually be put on public sale.

Arum said Tuesday the gate at the MGM alone will be more than \$72 million, obliterating the previous live gate record of \$20 million in Nevada set by Mayweather's 2013 fight with Canelo Alvarez.

Though the MGM will provide some tickets for its biggest gamblers, Arum said even the celebrities who can normally get free tickets to sit ringside will have to pay full fare for the fight — if they can get their hands on tickets at all.

Promoters announced a deal Tuesday with Sky Sports to televise the fight on pay-per-view in England and parts of Europe, part of another \$35 million expected to come in from foreign rights. Add in another \$10 million in sponsorships — Tecate beer will be the main sponsor — and the fight will gross more than \$100 million before a single home in North America buys the pay-per-view. Less certain is how many people will spend what is expected to be \$100 or so for the pay-per-view in the U.S., but that could easily

break records, too. Mayweather's 2007 fight with Oscar De La Hoya currently tops the charts with 2.44 million buys, but many think Mayweather-Pacquiao could do more than 3 million homes despite softness in the pay-per-view market in the last few years.

"That's the one element that's a mystery," Arum told The Associated Press. "It seems like it will break the record, but who really knows? Anyone who predicts the total pay-per-view is whistling in the dark."

Cable networks HBO and Showtime have yet to announce the pay-per-view price, saying they are still in negotiations with cable systems and satellite providers. Those negotiations are mostly about how the money will be divided between the broadcasters and the fight promoters, who historically have split revenues fairly equally.

With promoters holding the upper hand for this fight, though, that split could end up 65-35 in favor of the promotion. And if 3 million homes buy the fight at \$100, that would mean about \$200 million in revenue to Mayweather Promotions and Arum's Top Rank from pay-per-view alone.

Add in the other money and the two camps will

have more than \$300 million to divvy up. With Mayweather getting a 60-40 split, that would mean a purse of \$180 million or more to Mayweather and \$120 million or more to Pacquiao.

Both purses would dwarf the biggest ever in boxing, including the 2007 fight with Mayweather in which De La Hoya made a reported \$52 million. Mayweather's biggest payday was

against Alvarez, when he was guaranteed \$41.5 million and may have made another \$20 million off the pay-per-view sales.

"You get to this level where you're making nine figures in 36 minutes," Mayweather said at the fight press conference this month in Los Angeles, "and you have to be a winner."

Judging from the money on the table in this bout, it's hard to find a loser. □

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# Fertility, Naturally

By: Dr. Carlos Viana

Fecundity or being able to have children has always been an issue. Virtually all cultures have had a means of venerating the Supreme Being as a Divine Female that could be asked to help with fertility problems. Whether you already have child and would like more children or hope to have a family in the future, the physical and psychological health of both partners as well as lifestyle can greatly affect your chances of getting pregnant and having a healthy baby.

Unfortunately, the U.S. National Survey of Family Growth reported that impaired fecundity rose significantly between 1982 and 1995, the biggest increase in women under 25 and it's still rising. Similar findings from Europe show that 40 percent of men entering the draft in Denmark have low sperm count levels associated with infertility.

If you're under 35 and have been trying to get pregnant for less than a year (or fewer than six months if you're over 35), you have no reason to be concerned yet. To make sure you're doing all you can to enhance your chances of getting pregnant come in for a consultation. If you've had frequent unprotected sex for more than a year (six months if you're over 35) without conceiving, you or your partner may have a condition that's interfering with your chances of conceiving. A doctor can diagnose a fertility problem.

Researchers estimate that as many as

one in ten couples have trouble getting pregnant and this is expected to rise. If you're having trouble, that doesn't mean you'll never have children. Many couples need extra time or medical intervention to get pregnant. We have found many of our fecundity (fertility/pregnancy) patients have a health imbalance, emotional stress or simply need sexual education. Our couples have had success using a combination of detoxification, clinical nutrition, couples counseling and Traditional Chinese Medical (TCM) therapies that we offer in our clinic. We have found that by supporting and balancing both partners, we can enhance the positive outcomes.

Women tend to have fertility problems when they have a history of: endometriosis, uterine fibroids, pelvic inflammatory disease, blocked Fallopian tubes from a previous infection or surgery, or chronic illness such as diabetes, cancer, or thyroid disease. Sexually transmitted disease (STD's) can adversely affect chances of getting pregnant. Women who have painful or irregular periods or excessive facial and body hair have hormonal imbalances impacting fecundity. Finally, women can have pain during intercourse or be allergic to their partner's sperm.

Men can have problems if they have a history of: infection with the mumps virus after puberty, diabetes, cancer, thyroid disease, undescended



testicles, testicular tumors, cysts or cancer, or varicoceles (varicose veins in the scrotum.) Heat kills sperm, so tight underwear, hot tub, saunas, and frequent long-distance bike rides can greatly reduce your sperm count.

In both we want to make sure that neither smokes tobacco nor marijuana nor uses alcohol to excess. Studies show that under or overweight couples have a harder time getting pregnant and having a healthy pregnancy.

Reports show that men working with pesticides have higher rates of infertility. Women, whose mother's were exposed to the pesticide, DDT needed increased time to get pregnant. Another fertility and health concern is a chemical used plastics and the lining of cans, bisphenol A (BPA). The latest studies show that men who carry cell phones in pants pocket or clipped to their belts may be exposing their testicles to damaging radiofrequency electromagnetic waves according to Ashok Agarwal, PhD, director of the Center for Reproductive Medicine at the Glickman Urological and Kidney Institute in Cleveland.

Since chemicals, pesticides and cell phones are part of modern life, precaution-

ary methods like using protection and minimizing use and exposure may help. Choose glass over plastic, use natural house cleaners, organic body products and non-toxic garden products. Besides, lifestyle changes, to increase chance of pregnancy, the woman can keep track of her basal body temperature daily and check for changes in cervical mucus to determine her ovulation cycle. New, accurate home fertility scopes are available as well as urine fertility testing for daily charting. When you know your fertile days, planning is easier.

I recommend the man-on-top position which allows for the deepest penetration and places sperm closer to egg. When a woman has an orgasm the mouth of the womb extends to the vaginal floor and picks up the sperm. I recommend woman have an orgasm after their partner. Lastly, stress can affect appetite, emotions, and the hormones required to release the eggs. If you're stressed out, you may ovulate later or not at all. As many couples trying to get pregnant know, feeling anxious and overwhelmed can kill your sex drive.

In early pregnancy a woman's body produces an elevated level of hCG (human chorionic gonadotropin). About 14 days after fertilization (the time you would expect your period) the amount of HCG has increased so that, some home pregnancy tests may be able to detect the hormone in your urine and give you a positive result. Most home pregnancy tests are not sensitive enough to guarantee you an ac-

curate result in a couple of days of conceiving. You're more likely to get an accurate result if you wait until a week after your expected period before testing. Get the Point! If you really want to increase your chances of getting pregnant and having a healthy baby, before you try artificial methods, come in for a natural fecundity workup. Being healthy before pregnancy, gives your baby a healthy start. We're here to answer your questions. Meanwhile a small offering to a fecundity deity won't hurt.

CARLOS VIANA, Ph. D. is an Oriental Medical Doctor (O.M.D.) having studied in Shanghai, China; a Board Cert. Clinical Nutritionist (C.C.N.), a fellow member of the Board Certified Association of Addiction Professionals (C.Ad.), the Chairperson of the Latin American Committee of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT), a Rejuvenating Cell Therapist and specializes in Anti-Aging Medicine, has a weekly radio program, writes and lectures extensively. For information: VIANA NATURAL HEALING CENTER NV, Kibaima 7, Aruba, TEL: 585-1270, Web Site:

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# Are you willing to pay to watch video clips online?

MICHAEL LIETKE

AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

Would you pay to see some of the Internet's best video clips first? Vessel, a new service trying to change the way that short video pieces make money on the Internet and mobile devices, is betting on it.

Instead of free-for-all distribution supported solely by advertising, Vessel will charge \$3 per month for exclusive early access to clips of musicians, sporting events, comedians and many other forms of entertainment not available on YouTube or any other digital video service for at least three days. CEO Jason Kilar, formerly head of Hulu Plus, believes Vessel's model will be able to pay video producers about \$50 per 1,000 views of their clips on the site. That compares with just \$2.20 per 1,000 views of ad-supported video at sites such as YouTube, Kilar says.

The extra money, in theory, will provide digital video producers with the means and incentive to create even better content that



In this photo taken Monday, March 23, 2015, Vessel CEO and co-founder Jason Kilar, right, and co-founder Richard Tom pose for a photo outside their headquarters in San Francisco.

Associated Press

will prod more people to subscribe to Vessel. The same "virtuous cycle" has enabled Internet video service Netflix to finance more of its own original programming and pay more money to license compelling en-

tertainment while its audience has nearly tripled to 57 million customers from 20 million in the past four years.

"We think this is going to be a really big deal, like the advent of cable-and-satellite television in the 1970s," Kilar, 43, says of Vessel.

YouTube, which is owned by Google Inc., says Kilar's estimates are wrong, but declined to reveal its average payout per 1,000 views. Payments to YouTube partners have increased by at least 50 percent in each of the past three years, the company says. Research firm eMarketer Inc. estimated that YouTube's total ad revenue last totaled \$7.6 billion and about \$4.6 billion was paid out to YouTube's partners.

The concept, which has been in beta testing for two

months, debuts Tuesday. Anyone who signs up with Vessel by 3 a.m. EDT Friday will receive a one-year subscription for free.

Vessel's ambitions sound like wishful thinking to Forrester Research analyst Jim Nail, who doubts many people will pay to watch a video that will be available for free within a few days.

"That kind of restriction only works when you have content that people are really knocking down the doors to see," Nail says. "It is going to totally come down to what kind of content that they can get."

Unless they have the content that justifies paying \$3 a month, nothing will save them."

Vessel so far has about 70,000 video clips separated into about 160 categories, including sports, com-

edy, music, video games and food. Many clips are free and supported by ads, just like most video on YouTube.

Vessel's subscription side features videos from about 130 contributors. They include Emmy Award-winning actor Alec Baldwin, who is showcasing "Love Ride," a series featuring him dispensing relationship advice in the back seat of taxis, and the online comedy duo of Rhett McLaughlin and Link Neal, who have more than 3 million subscribers on their YouTube channel.

Machinima CEO Chad Gutstein anticipates a large audience will pay for early access to the video gaming specialist's clips because video game enthusiasts "are more engaged and more obsessed with what they are doing than anything I have ever experienced. They just want to be there first."

Before Vessel, Kilar spent five years running online television streaming service Hulu, which was launched in 2007 by a group of TV networks trying to counter YouTube's popularity. By the time Kilar stepped down in 2013, Hulu's premium Plus service had attracted about 6 million subscribers, though it never mounted much of a challenge to YouTube, where about 300 hours of video is posted per minute.

Since Kilar and another former Hulu executive Rich Tom started Vessel last year, the San Francisco startup has raised \$77 million from two venture capital firms, Greylock Partners and Benchmark Capital, and Amazon.com Inc. CEO Jeff Bezos. □





## Stocks dip as investors assess economy, earnings

**STEVE ROTHWELL**  
**AP Markets Writer**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — U.S. stocks dropped Tuesday as investors weighed company news and the latest report on consumer prices. Signs that the dollar could resume its recent surge also made investors nervous. Homebuilders bucked the trend, gaining after sales of

have helped power a six-year bull run for stocks. "We're in something of a holding pattern as markets continue to digest all that's going on," said Kristina Hooper, U.S. investment strategist at Allianz Global Investors. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 12.92 points, or 0.6 percent, to 2,091.50

dollar. The U.S. currency had started the day lower against the euro before erasing those losses. The dollar index, which measures the strength of the U.S. currency against a basket of others such as the euro and Japanese yen, has climbed 15 percent in the last six months. That rise has already

vous about it, with earnings season coming up," said JJ Kinahan, chief market strategist at TD Ameritrade. In other economic news, a modest rebound in gas costs and broad gains in other categories lifted consumer prices for the first time in four months. The consumer price index rose 0.2 percent in February, the Labor Department said Tuesday, after dropping 0.7 percent the previous month.

Utilities declined the most of the 10 industry sectors in the S&P 500. They are the worst performing group in the index this year, falling 5.8 percent.

These stocks typically pay dividends that are high relative to their companies' share prices. They were in demand last year, when government bond yields fell, and investors wanted them for the level of income they were no longer able to get from bonds.

Now, they are less popular because many investors think that the Fed will raise interest rates later this year. That means that the yield on safer bonds should eventually rise, making utilities less attractive by comparison. "Your real vulnerability is on the stock side," said Jeff Lancaster, a principal of San Francisco-based Bingham, Osborn & Scarborough. "You can lose more money in a day in stocks than you can in a bad year on bonds." □



**NYSE floor Governor Nicholas Brigandi, center, works with traders on the New York Stock Exchange floor, Tuesday, March 24, 2015. U.S. stocks dropped Tuesday as investors weighed company news and the latest report on consumer prices. (AP Photo/Richard Drew)**

new U.S. homes in February climbed to their fastest pace in seven years. The stock market has drifted lower for two straight days. The declines follow a rally in the market last week when Federal Reserve policy makers surprised investors by suggesting they were in no hurry to raise interest rates. Those low rates

Tuesday. The Dow slipped 104.90 points, or 0.6 percent, to 18,011.14. The Nasdaq composite fell 16.25 points, or 0.3 percent, to 4,994.73. Stocks were little changed throughout the morning before drifting lower in the afternoon. The slump in stocks coincided with a rally in the

weighed on the earnings of companies such as Coca-Cola and Caterpillar that rely on overseas sales for a large portion of their earnings. S&P 500 companies start reporting results for the first quarter next month. "The dollar overall is something that everyone is watching, everyone is ner-

## H&M sees strong gain, sales; market share increases

**STOCKHOLM (AP)** — Swedish budget fashion chain Hennes & Mauritz AB says its three-month earnings surged 35 percent to 3.6 billion kronor (\$420 million) on strong sales as shoppers were attracted by new collections.

The net profit in the period ending Feb. 28 was up from 2.6 billion kronor in the same three months a year earlier. Net sales were 40.2 billion kronor, up 25 percent from 32.1 billion kronor a year earlier, the Stockholm-headquartered company said Tuesday.

CEO Karl-Johan Persson said the "very good start to 2015" was boosted by good collections and strong expansion of its online services and new stores, including in a new market Taiwan, but cautioned that a strong dollar would continue to increase purchasing costs. The company's stock fell more than 2 percent to 344.20 kronor in afternoon trading in Stockholm.

H&M said it plans to complete a two-year plan to open 400 new stores by the end of this year and enter new online markets in Portugal, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Belgium. It also plans to establish stores in new markets Peru, Macau, South Africa and India by year-end.

Persson said that a highlight of this year will be the opening of H&M's flagship store on Herald Square in New York, which will be one of the group's largest stores in the U.S., which is H&M's second largest market after Germany.

H&M is known for its fashionable, low-price collections for mainstream consumers. It has more than 3,500 stores worldwide and 132,000 employees. Its brands also include the higher-priced COS and urban fashion labels such as Monki, Weekday and Cheap Monday. □

## Google hires finance chief from Morgan Stanley

**NATHANIEL POPPER**  
**CONOR DOUGHERTY**  
**© 2015 New York Times**

Google, which is facing questions about increased spending in the face of slipping prices for its ads, has turned to the big bank Morgan Stanley for its new chief financial officer, one of the most visible examples yet of the exodus of talent from Wall Street to Silicon Valley.

Ruth Porat, Morgan Stanley's chief financial officer since 2010, has been one of the most powerful women on Wall Street, and she will immediately become

one of the most powerful women in Silicon Valley, an industry that similarly has been criticized for its lack of gender balance. Less than a decade ago, Wall Street firms were the premier destination for young college graduates and talented executives. More recently, though, the financial industry has been struggling to continue growing as it faces a raft of new regulations and a lack of public confidence as a result of the financial crisis. Silicon Valley, on the other hand, has been growing rapidly and is snapping

up much of the talent that used to end up on Wall Street.

Google's announcement of Porat's hiring Tuesday comes just two weeks after its current chief financial officer, Patrick Pichette, announced his retirement on the company's social network, Google Plus, in an unusually personal message that jokingly cited his membership in the "Fraternity of Worldwide Insecure Overachievers."

As Google's principal liaison to Wall Street, Porat is inheriting a tricky position. Google in recent years

has expanded into an array of speculative investments like self-driving cars, biotechnology and space travel. That wanderlust has made Wall Street nervous, especially since the company continues to make close to 90 percent of its revenue from advertising. Growth in Google's primary business, search advertising, has flattened out at about 20 percent a year for the past few years while the company's financial results have failed to meet consensus analysts' expectations for five straight quarters. □



## The Zero-Sum Moment



DAVID BROOKS  
© 2015 New York Times

National elections take place within a specific global moment. In the 1990s, there was a presumption that we were living in an age of rapid progress. Democracy was spreading. Tyranny was receding. Asia was booming. The European Union was building. Conflict in the Middle East was lessening. The world was cumulatively heading toward greater pluralism, individualism, prosperity and freedom. Today it's harder to have faith in rapid progress. Democracy is receding. Autocrats like Vladimir Putin of Russia are marching. The European project is decaying. Economies are struggling. Reactionary forces like the Islamic State and Iran are winning. The Middle East is deteriorating. In this climate, the tone and focus of politics changes. Politics is less about win-win situations and more about zero-sum situations. It is less about reforms that will improve all lives and more about unadorned struggles for power. Who will control the ground in places like Ukraine and Syria? Will Iran get the bomb? Will the White House or Congress grab power over treaties and immigration policy?

At these moments, tough guys do well. Cooperative skills are less valued while confrontational skills are more valued. Benjamin Netanyahu wins re-election in Israel. The pugnacious Nicolas Sarkozy, of all people, is staging a comeback in France. Putin is in his element.

Barack Obama started out as a hope-and-change idealist, but he has had to toughen to fit the times. Angela Merkel is the paradigmatic leader of the age: shrewd, unemotional, nonidealistic, austere and interested in power. As John Kornblum, the former U.S. ambassador to Germany, told George Packer of *The New Yorker*: "If you cross her you end up dead. ... There's a whole list of alpha males who thought they would get her out of the way, and they're all now in other walks of life."

In these moments, right-leaning parties tend to do well and have a stronger story to tell on national security. They speak the language of nationalism and cultural cohesion. People who are economically insecure (and more likely to lean left) drop out of the political process.

Both parties, though, change shape to fit the zero-sum contours of the moment. Progressives emphasize compassion less and redistribution more. Conserva-

tives emphasize entrepreneurial dynamism less and the threat of government elites more. Electorates get a little uglier when faith in progress declines. Voters across the spectrum get more cynical and distrustful. They are quicker to perceive threats from The Other.

For example, anti-Semitism is a good barometer of a worsening public mood. According to the Pew Research Center, acts of hostility toward Jews are now rampant in 39 percent of countries, up from 26 percent in 2007. The U.K. Community Security Trust registered 1,168 anti-Semitic incidents in Britain in 2014, more than double the number from the previous year.

It's rare to have major realignments at a moment like this. Everybody is hunkered down and risk averse. Voters in this battened-down frame of mind are willing to elect familiar faces (better the devil you know). The Israeli, American and European electorates have been remarkably stable over the past decade. In Israel, for example, the overall vote that went to right-wing parties was stable from this election to last; it's just that the Likud Party grabbed a big share of the nationalist electorate. Still, you do see some shifts. Extreme parties rise, especially the ones that repel supposed interlopers and oppose elite global projects. We're seeing that across the globe with the Tea Party, UKIP in Britain, National Front on the right in France and Syriza on the left in Greece.

Extreme parties rarely take power, but they do influence politics because mainstream politicians have to co-opt them. Mainstream politicians have to fight two-front wars: the official one against their ideological opponents and the unofficial one to silence, co-opt and crush the extremists on their own side.

This is what Netanyahu did in Israel. He didn't literally renounce the idea of a two-state solution forevermore. He just said that it would be too dangerous in the near term as long as Islamist-style radicalism is on the march. (A defensible proposition.) Still, these comments and the ones on Israeli Arabs were blatant panders. He took Knesset seats away from parties to his right by becoming more like them.

These conditions will influence the 2016 American election, too. I'd guess that the cultural moment favors Scott Walker and Chris Christie, who have records of confrontation, over Jeb Bush, who hasn't won election in this era and has a softer mien. I'd also say they strengthen Hillary Clinton. She has a Merkel-like toughness and may actually benefit from the familiar-face phenomenon.

In general, the power of the cultural moment shapes the candidates. But occasionally there is a leader who can turn a negative popular mood into a positive one. FDR and Reagan did this. But you have to be very, very good. □



## Trillion-Dollar Fraudsters



PAUL KRUGMAN  
© 2015 New York Times

By now it's a Republican Party tradition: Every year the party produces a budget that allegedly slashes deficits but which turns out to contain a trillion-dollar "magic asterisk" - a line that promises huge spending cuts and/or revenue increases, but without explaining where the money is supposed to come from.

But the just-released budgets from the House and Senate majorities break new ground. Each contains not one but two trillion-dollar magic asterisks: one on spending, one on revenue. And that's actually an understatement. If either budget were to become law, it would leave the federal government several trillion dollars deeper in debt than claimed, and that's just in the first decade. You might be tempted to shrug this off, since these budgets will not, in fact, become law. Or you might say that this is what all politicians do. But it isn't. The modern GOP's raw fiscal dishonesty is something new in American politics. And that's telling us something important about what has happened to half of our political spectrum.

So, about those budgets: Both claim drastic reductions in federal spending. Some of those spending reductions are specified: There would be savage cuts in food stamps, similarly savage cuts in Medicaid over and above reversing the recent ex-

pansion, and an end to Obamacare's health insurance subsidies. Rough estimates suggest that either plan would roughly double the number of Americans without health insurance. But both also claim more than a trillion dollars in further cuts to mandatory spending, which would almost surely have to come out of Medicare or Social Security. What form would these further cuts take? We get no hint.

Meanwhile, both budgets call for repeal of the Affordable Care Act, including the taxes that pay for the insurance subsidies. That's \$1 trillion of revenue. Yet both claim to have no effect on tax receipts; somehow, the federal government is supposed to make up for the lost Obamacare revenue. How, exactly? We are, again, given no hint.

And there's more: The budgets also claim large reductions in spending on other programs. How would these be achieved? You know the answer.

It's very important to realize that this isn't normal political behavior. The George W. Bush administration was no slouch when it came to deceptive presentation of tax plans, but it was never this blatant. And the Obama administration has been remarkably scrupulous in its fiscal pronouncements. OK, I can already hear the snickering, but it's the simple truth. Remember all the ridicule heaped on the spending projections in the Affordable Care Act? Actual spending is coming in well below expectations, and the Congressional Budget Office has marked its forecast for the next decade down by 20 percent. Remember the jeering when President Barack Obama declared that he would cut the deficit in half by the end of his first term? Well, a sluggish economy delayed things, but only by a year. The deficit in calendar 2013 was less than half its 2009 level, and it has continued to fall.

So, no, outrageous fiscal mendacity is neither historically normal nor bipartisan. It's a modern Republican thing. And the question we should ask is why.

One answer you sometimes hear is that what Republicans really believe is that tax cuts for the rich would generate a huge boom and a surge in revenue, but they're afraid that the public won't find such claims credible. So magic asterisks are really stand-ins for their belief in the magic of supply-side economics, a belief that remains intact even though proponents in that doctrine have been wrong about everything for decades.

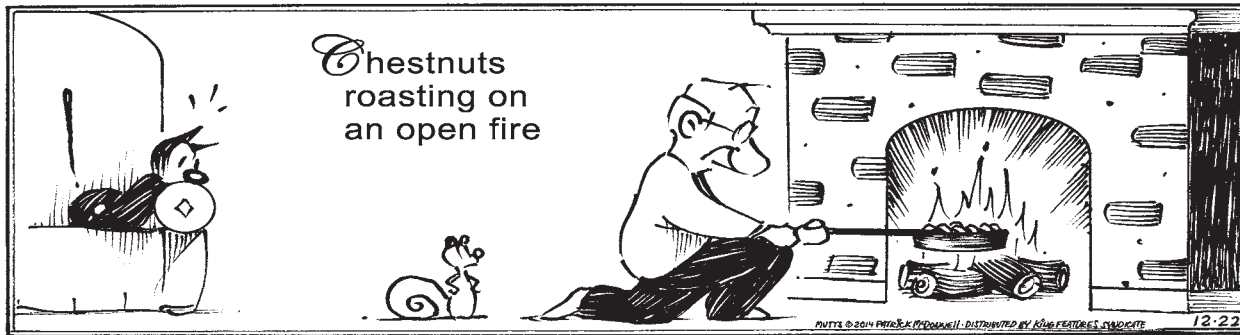
But I'm partial to a more cynical explanation. Think about what these budgets would do if you ignore the mysterious trillions in unspecified spending cuts and revenue enhancements. What you're left with is huge transfers of income from the poor and the working class, who would see severe benefit cuts, to the rich, who would see big tax cuts. And the simplest way to understand these budgets is surely to suppose that they are intended to do what they would, in fact, actually do: make the rich richer and ordinary families poorer.

But this is, of course, not a policy direction the public would support if it were clearly explained. So the budgets must be sold as courageous efforts to eliminate deficits and pay down debt - which means that they must include trillions in imaginary, unexplained savings.

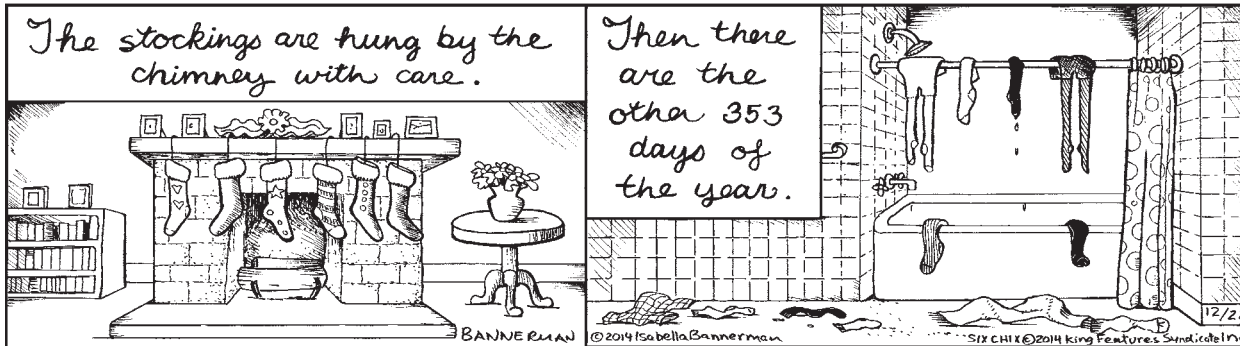
Does this mean that all those politicians declaiming about the evils of budget deficits and their determination to end the scourge of debt were never sincere? Yes, it does. Look, I know that it's hard to keep up the outrage after so many years of fiscal fraudulence. But please try. We're looking at an enormous, destructive con job, and you should be very, very angry. □



## Mutts



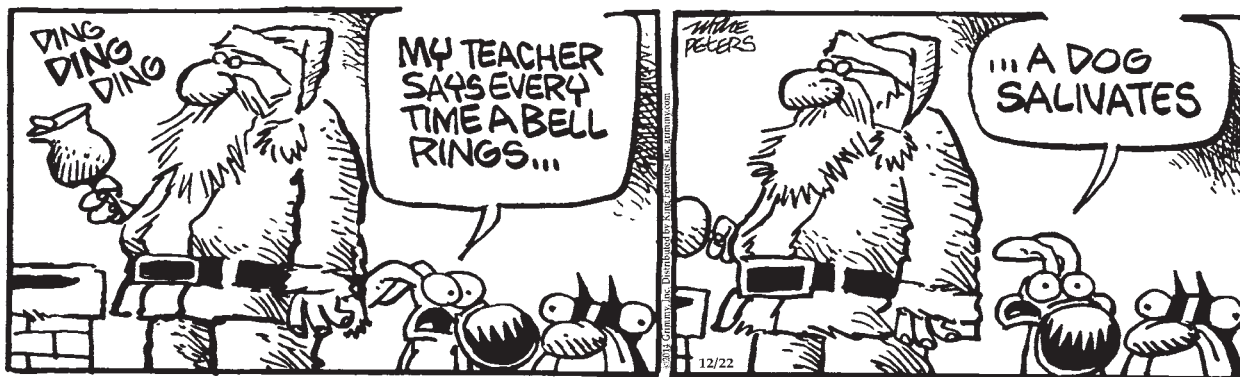
## 6 Chix



## Blondie



## Mother Goose & Grimm



## Baby Blues



## Zits



## Conceptis Sudoku

4							8
	1	5	4		9	3	6
	9		8		5		4
		4		3		5	
3							6
		1		5		2	
	8		9		2		3
	3	9	1		7	8	2
2							7

Difficulty Level ★

12/22

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Saturday's puzzle answer

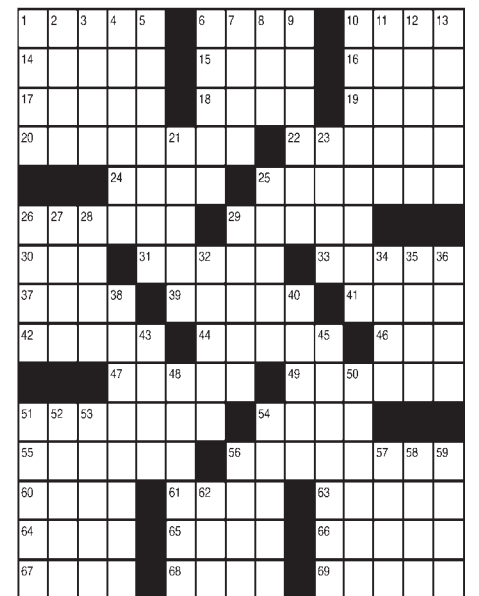
6	3	2	7	8	4	1	9	5
4	8	1	2	9	5	6	7	3
9	7	5	6	3	1	4	2	8
7	1	6	8	5	3	9	4	2
5	4	3	9	6	2	7	8	1
2	9	8	4	1	7	5	3	6
3	6	9	5	4	8	2	1	7
8	2	4	1	7	6	3	5	9
1	5	7	3	2	9	8	6	4

## ACROSS

- Humble
- Extend across
- Spoils; defaces
- See eye to eye
- Vigorous
- Bread spread
- Actress Garbo
- Dollar bills
- Singer Horne
- Guards
- USPS inquiry to find an item lost in transit
- Loose \_\_\_; bits of unfinished business
- Consecrates
- Trash can
- Sunflower \_\_\_; healthy snack
- Orang or chimp
- Amounts owed
- Big department store chain
- Adriatic & Red
- Underground plant parts
- Pig's dinner
- Foreigner living abroad
- Staircase piece
- Huge bird from Australia
- Reasonable thinking
- Henpecked
- Church leaders
- Dirt
- Hun leader
- Lasts
- Maize
- Conceited
- Boise's state
- \_\_\_-highs; long socks
- Omelet maker's purchase
- Adamant refusal
- Stitches
- Misplace
- Say hello to

## DOWN

- Remains behind
- Monster



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/22/14

## Saturday's Puzzle Solved

MISS	ACMES	FROM
ABLE	SUAVE	IOWA
TEAL	TREAT	GLEN
EXPLOIT	DUCHESS	
	OUR	DEPOT
CLOUT	BID	LEADS
LINT	SAS	HERNIA
OBI	CARACAS	DAB
TROJAN	BAD	GENE
HANOI	OLD	CESAR
	UNITE	FOE
CURRENT	NIT	WITS
UPON	CABIN	HORA
LOPE	AWAKE	IT IS
PREY	SANER	ZAPS

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12/22/14

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 38 Soda crackers           | 52 Make amends               |
| 40 Spanish man             | 53 Scatter                   |
| 43 Saw or wrench           | 54 Good judgment             |
| 45 Elevating               | 56 ___out; gorges            |
| 48 Driveway coat           | 57 Hang on to                |
| 50 Plane without an engine | 58 "My Country, 'Tis of ___" |
| 51 Gets ready for a trip   | 59 Type; variety             |
|                            | 62 In the past               |



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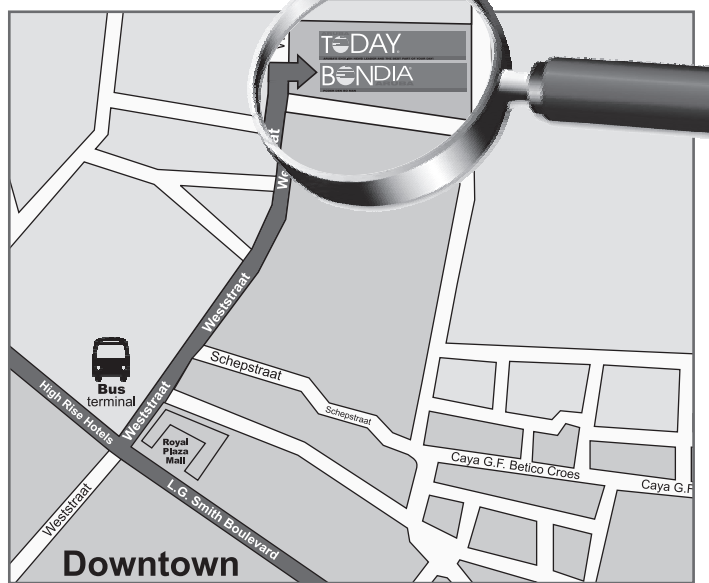
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## Czechs deploy wild horses from Britain to save biodiversity

KAREL JANICEK

Associated Press

MILOVICE, Czech Republic

(AP) — Twenty-five years ago it was a military zone where occupying Soviet troops held exercises. Today it's a sanctuary inhabited by wild animals that scientists hope will improve biodiversity among local plants as well as save endangered species.

A herd of 14 wild mares from Britain's Exmoor National Park were moved in January to the former Milovice military base, 35 kilometers (22 miles) north-east of Prague, the Czech capital.

After an acclimatization period at a small enclosure, the horses were released Saturday to a 40-hectare (99-acre) area. Their task is to stop the spread of aggressive and evasive grasses — including bushgrass — that are delicacies for them. The invasive plants began to grow after Soviet troops withdrew in 1991, threatening the area's original plants and animals. A stallion will join the mares in April.

Dalibor Dostal, director of European Wildlife, the organization behind the project,



In this photo taken on Monday, March 16, 2015, some of the 14 wild mares from Britain's Exmoor National Park rest in an enclosure near the village of Milovice, Czech Republic.

Associated Press

said scientists decided that using big-hoofed animals such as wild horses, which "maintained the steppe character of nature across Europe for thousands of years," could solve the invasive plant problem in the

most effective way.

That should also help some 30 threatened species in the area, including the Mountain Alcon Blue butterfly and the Star Gentian flowering plant.

"Alternatives to wild animals are very expensive and their impact on the environment is not very good," Dostal said.

Domestic animals such as sheep were ruled out be-

cause they would feed on the endangered plants, and mechanical cutting costs too much.

"(The horses) will move freely on the pastures the whole year. If they have a source of water and enough space, they don't need any care. They are able to care of themselves," Dostal said.

Environmentalists are already planning to expand the territory and use other

big-hoofed animals such as European bison.

The Soviet army that stayed after the 1968 Soviet-led invasion of then-Czechoslovakia was the last armed force in the area.

Dostal said the soldiers' activities actually simulated the impact of hoofed animals, a reason why "military zones in the Czech Republic are the places with the best biodiversity." □

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## Angelina Jolie undergoes further preventive surgery

DANICA KIRKA  
Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — Oscar-winning actress Angelina Jolie revealed Tuesday that she has undergone more preventive surgery, having her ovaries and fallopian tubes removed in hopes of reducing her risk of cancer.

Writing in The New York Times, the filmmaker and philanthropist said a recent blood test showed a possible early sign of cancer. The news was a blow to the star who had already had a double mastectomy.

"I went through what I imagine thousands of other women have felt," she wrote. "I told myself to stay calm, to be strong, and that I had no reason to think I wouldn't live to see my children grow up and to meet my grandchildren."

Jolie, 39, revealed two years ago that she carries a defective breast cancer gene that puts her at high risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer. Her moth-



In this Nov. 27, 2014 file photo, director Angelina Jolie poses for photographers during a photo call for her film "Unbroken" in Berlin, Germany. Associated Press

er died of ovarian cancer, and her maternal grandmother also had ovarian cancer — strong evidence of an inherited, genetic risk that led the actress to have her healthy breasts removed to try to avoid the same fate.

Only a small percentage of women inherit the same faulty gene, known as BRCA1 — the name stands for breast cancer suscep-

tibility gene. These mutations are most commonly found in women of Eastern European Jewish descent, though other groups, including the Norwegian, Dutch and Icelandic, also have slightly higher rates of these mutations.

The average woman has a 12 percent risk of developing breast cancer sometime during her life. Women who have inherited a faulty

BRCA gene are about five times more likely to get breast cancer.

Jolie said that while having the gene mutation alone was not a reason to resort to surgery — other medical options were possible — her family history influenced her decision to have further surgery now. The surgery puts a woman in menopause and Jolie wrote she's now taking hormones.

Her courageous decision to publicly announce her double mastectomy was praised as a watershed moment in efforts to persuade women to get breast cancer screening — and to raise awareness of the need for early detection. The same sense of mission led her to write about her follow-up care, although she said her decision wasn't necessarily the right one for everyone.

"There is more than one way to deal with any health issue," she wrote. "The most important thing is to learn

about the options and choose what is right for you personally."

Coming forward to tell her story will play a vital role in raising awareness, those who work for cancer charities say. They hope other women at risk will be encouraged to speak with their doctors.

"Angelina Jolie has made a really brave decision," Katherine Taylor, acting chief executive of Ovarian Cancer Action. "It immediately puts the person into surgical menopause so it is not a decision to take lightly."

Jolie's article makes plain the anguish the results of the new blood tests brought. She said she immediately called her husband, the actor Brad Pitt, who flew home from France within hours.

"The beautiful thing about such moments in life is that there is so much clarity," she wrote. "You know what you live for and what matters. It is polarizing, and it is peaceful." □



# Ferrell, Hart defend 'Get Hard' after a jolt of criticism

JAKE COYLE

MICHAEL CIDONI LENNOX

Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — In the annals of film festival flops — from unexpected boos to red-carpet gaffes — the premiere of the Will Ferrell, Kevin Hart comedy "Get Hard" will go down as a doozy.

After the film premiered last week at the South By Southwest Film Festival, during a Q&A with director Ethan Cohen, an audience member voiced not so much a question as a harsh judgment. "This film seems racist," he said, using an expletive. Another audience member also asked if the film, about a hedge fund manager (Ferrell) who witlessly hires a law-abiding acquaintance (Hart) to prepare him for maximum security prison after being sentenced for fraud, was perpetuating stereotypes. That sound you might have



Kevin Hart, from left, Will Ferrell and director Ethan Cohen arrive for the world premiere of "Get Hard" during the South by Southwest Film Festival on Monday, March 16, 2015, in Austin, Texas.

heard emanating from Austin was the loud cursing of marketing executives for the film, which opens Friday.

Though film festival Q&As are often filled with questionable observations, these atypically blunt rebukes received outsized attention, drawing headlines from The Los Ange-

les Times and others. The damage continued with early reviews that also questioned the movie's handling of homosexuality in various scenes.

Much of the film's comedy rests on the Ferrell character's fears of being raped in prison, and among his preparations is an attempt to have oral sex with a gay

man in a bathroom stall. A critic for The Guardian wrote that future viewers "will be astonished that such a negative portrayal of homosexuality persisted in the mainstream in 2015." Variety wrote that the film was "undone by some of the ugliest gay-panic humor to befoul a studio release in recent memory." After initially seeking to avoid the controversy (Cohen, Ferrell and Hart cancelled interviews with The Associated Press before Ferrell and Hart rescheduled them), the film's stars and producers are vigorously defending their comedy as not a representation of stereotypes but a satire of them.

"Any time you're going to do an R-rated comedy, you're going to offend someone," said Ferrell in an interview alongside Hart. He continued: "But that's kind of what we do. We provoke. We prod. We also

show a mirror to what's already existing out there. We're playing fictitious characters who are articulating some of the attitudes and misconceptions that already exist."

"Get Hard" was written by Cohen along with Jay Martel and Ian Roberts, writing-producers from the sketch comedy show "Key and Peele." This is Cohen's directorial debut after penning screenplays to films like "Idiocracy" and "Tropic Thunder," a film that memorably flirted with racially sensitive territory in Robert Downey Jr.'s lampoon, in black face, of a Method actor run amok. In many ways, the comedy of "Get Hard" works similarly. Just as the humor of Downey's actor wasn't in his favor but about his own self-obsessive, racist delusions, Ferrell's character is a parody of the narrow perspective of the elitist one percent. □

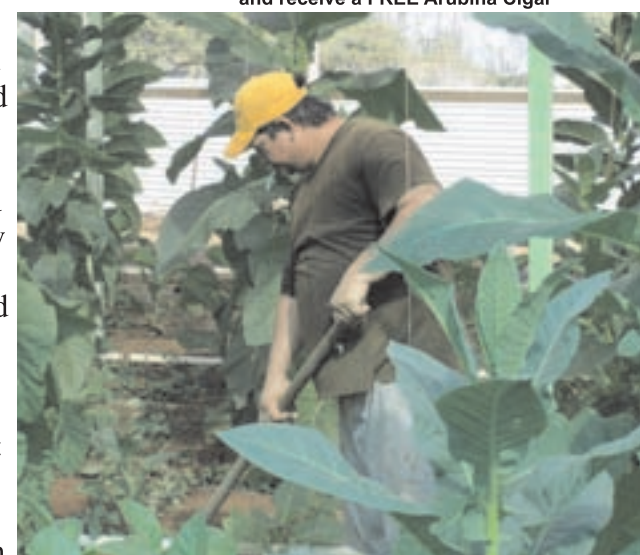
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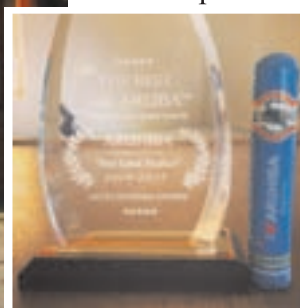
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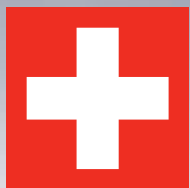
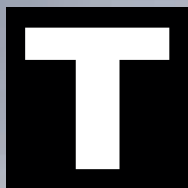
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